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Security Council

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Special report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 21 April 2012 (S/PRST/2012/15), by which the Council requested me to submit a report by 30 April 2012 on efforts towards the re-establishment of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. This report covers major developments that have occurred in Guinea-Bissau since the military coup d'état of 12 April 2012 and current efforts being undertaken to restore constitutional order in the country.

II. Developments in Guinea-Bissau

A. Update on the political situation

2. On the evening of 12 April 2012, elements of the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau carried out a coup d'état in the country. In a communiqué issued on 13 April, the junta announced the detention of the Interim President, Raimundo Pereira, the Prime Minister, Carlos Gomes Júnior, and the Armed Forces Chief of General Staff, General Antonio Indjai. The President of the Supreme Court, the President of the National Electoral Commission and three Cabinet Ministers remain in hiding in Bissau, while the whereabouts of the Prosecutor General remains unknown.

3. These events occurred against the backdrop of strained relations between the military and the political leadership of the country, as well as mounting tensions arising from the rejection by five of the nine presidential candidates of the outcome of the first round of the election, held on 18 March. According to the results announced by the National Electoral Commission, Carlos Gomes Júnior, the candidate of the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), won 48.97 per cent of the votes, and the former President, Koumba Yalá, supported by the Social Renewal Party (PRS), garnered 23.36 per cent of the votes, while the remaining seven candidates garnered collectively less than 36 per cent of the votes. The five candidates, namely Koumba Yalá, Serifo Nhamadjo, First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and member of the PAIGC, Henrique Rosa, former interim President and independent candidate, Afonso Té, candidate for the Republican Party for Independence and Development, and Serifo Baldé,

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candidate for the Guinean Salvation Democratic Socialist Party, alleged that the election was fraudulent, notwithstanding the assessment of international observers, including the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that the polls had been fair and credible. On 7 April, the Supreme Court of Guinea-Bissau also rejected the allegations of fraud made by the presidential candidates.

4. Tensions heightened following the announcement by the National Electoral Commission on 11 April that the second round of the election would be held on 29 April between Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior and Koumba Yalá. Hours before the coup, Mr. Yalá, speaking on behalf of the five candidates contesting the outcome of the first round, reiterated to the media that he would not take part in the run-off election, and warned against campaigning for the run-off, which was scheduled to commence on 13 April.

5. On 13 April, the coup leaders, calling themselves the "Military Command", indicated that they had carried out the coup because of an alleged "secret agreement" between the Governments of Guinea-Bissau and Angola for Angolan forces to be deployed to Guinea-Bissau under the mandate of the African Union. They also indicated that they had "no ambition for power", but had been "forced to act to defend themselves against the Government's attempts to annihilate the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau". The "Military Command" outlined its immediate goals as (a) removing obstacles to security sector reform; (b) fighting drug trafficking and consumption so as to restore the internal and external image of the country and consequently attract foreign investment; (c) tackling the culture of impunity; and (d) ensuring continuity of the process of building a democratic State based on respect for human rights and freedom of speech.

6. On 13 April, following an invitation from the "Military Command" to all political parties, representatives of 23 of those parties, including PRS and extra-parliamentary political parties, commenced a series of consultations with the military junta to discuss how to restore constitutional order in the country. The ruling PAIGC did not send a representative to the meeting. The discussions focused on two propositions from the participants: (a) a "constitutional transition" envisaging restoring constitutional order through the appointment of the current Interim President of the National Assembly as Interim President, the nomination by PAIGC of a Prime Minister other than Prime Minister Gomes Júnior, and the formation of a Government inclusive of all parties; and (b) a "non-constitutional transition" involving the dissolution of the National Assembly and the creation of a National Transitional Council, the appointment of a Transitional President and the formation of a National Unity Government led by a Transitional Prime Minister.

7. On 16 April, an ECOWAS delegation, led by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, visited Bissau and held meetings with the "Military Command", the five presidential candidates and a PAIGC delegation. The delegation reiterated the condemnation of the coup by ECOWAS and called for the immediate restoration of constitutional order and the release of all detained officials. Following these meetings, Mr. Ouédraogo informed my Special Representative and the African Union representative in Bissau that the delegation had received assurances from the "Military Command" that it would restore constitutional order. He also advised that ECOWAS had agreed to assist the junta with drawing up the modalities for the restoration of constitutional rule.

8. Notwithstanding the agreement reached with ECOWAS, on 17 April, representatives of the military junta and 21 of the 23 political parties signed an Agreement for the Stabilization and Maintenance of Constitutional and Democratic Order that provides for a non-constitutional political transitional arrangement, spanning a period of two years. The Agreement, which was expected to come into effect following the swearing-in of a Transitional President, also provides for the dissolution of the National Assembly, the establishment of a Transitional National Council and the return of the military to their barracks. Moreover, the Agreement states that the current civil and military justice system, and the current military hierarchy, will be maintained, and explains that the coup d'état of 12 April was triggered by a letter dated 9 April sent to me by Mr. Carlos Gomes Júnior, in his capacity as Prime Minister (S/2012/254, annex II), in which he requested that the Security Council consider the possibility of deploying a peacekeeping force to Guinea-Bissau. This is in contradiction with the military junta's statement issued on 13 April, in which it justified carrying out the coup d'état because of an alleged "secret agreement" between the Government of Guinea-Bissau and Angola, as mentioned in paragraph 5 above.

9. On 19 April, the military junta and their political party allies announced that the Interim Speaker of the National Assembly, who is also one of the five candidates contesting the outcome of the first round of the presidential election, Mr. Serifo Nhamadjo, would be appointed as the Transitional President, while Mr. Sory Djaló, acting President of PRS, would be the Speaker of the Transitional National Council. On 20 April, Mr. Nhamadjo denied having been consulted and stressed that he favoured a return to constitutional order, stating that the exclusion of his party from the process was unacceptable. He further announced that he would commence consultations with national stakeholders, including non-parliamentary parties and civil society, on 21 April.

10. On 21 April, Mr. Nhamadjo convened a meeting of the Parliamentary Bureau, which was attended by PAIGC; the party declined, however, to participate in the consultations. He also held consultations with the "Military Command", non-parliamentary parties and civil society organizations from 21 to 23 April, according to him, to prepare for discussions at the Permanent Commission of the National Assembly before the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Summit scheduled for 26 April in Abidjan. Meanwhile, the Armed Forces General Staff announced on 22 April that it had set up a 24-hour forum at the Army General Staff Headquarters for members of the public wishing to discuss the situation in the country.

11. Meanwhile, tensions within PAIGC, which had surfaced in the lead-up to the party's selection of its candidate for the presidential election of 18 March, became more acute following the coup d'état. The Interim Speaker, Serifo Nhamadjo, and the Defence Minister, Baciro Djá, supported by some party members, had contested the selection process that resulted in the designation of the PAIGC leader, Mr. Carlos Gomes Júnior, as the party's presidential candidate. As a result, both officials decided to run as independent candidates in defiance of the party. Tensions within PAIGC were further aggravated by the decision of Mr. Nhamadjo to join the group of five presidential candidates contesting the outcome of the first round of the election. On 22 April, the Permanent Commission of the Political Bureau of PAIGC issued a statement announcing that it had withdrawn its confidence in Mr. Nhamadjo. On 23 April, a group of PAIGC supporters of Mr. Nhamadjo

announced their intention to hold a meeting at PAIGC headquarters, but their attempts to enter the party's headquarters were resisted by other partisans supporting Mr. Gomes Júnior. On 24 April, a group describing itself as protest leaders within PAIGC issued a statement accusing Mr. Gomes Júnior of several violations, including nepotism, manipulation of justice and corruption.

B. Update on the human rights situation

12. Several cases of human rights violations and abuses have been reported since the coup d'état, including arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment during detention and the curtailment of the right to personal security, as well as the right to freedom of expression, movement and assembly. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) has been in contact with the police and military leaders in the country to remind them of their responsibility for ensuring the safety of the detained officials and requesting permission to visit them. On 14 and 18 April, the "Military Command" granted permission to the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the Interim President and the Prime Minister and to provide them with medicines and other personal items. On 26 April, UNIOGBIS was finally granted access to all the detainees. The detainees have not had access to their families or to legal representation, although the military have allowed food and clothing to be delivered to the detainees from their respective families.

13. Members of the armed forces were reported to have ransacked and looted the residences of all detainees and of public officials who are in hiding. They also removed their vehicles and personal belongings. At least two military officers and the Secretary of State for Veterans have been arrested in the northern town of Farim, in the Oio region, and are currently being held in Mansôa military barracks, north of Bissau. Representatives of the ruling PAIGC and other Government officials have also complained to UNIOGBIS of acts of intimidation by the military, but the "Military Command" has denied these claims.

14. On 13 April, a journalist linked to a news blog was arrested and severely beaten, and his equipment was confiscated. A female singer who supported the PAIGC electoral campaign and was at the residence of Mr. Carlos Gomes Júnior when the coup took place was also arrested and beaten. She was released along with the journalist on 13 April. On 15 April, a march organized by a group of young people to protest against the coup d'état was violently dispersed by the military, leaving one civilian seriously injured.

15. On 18 April, Reporters without Borders condemned the restrictions imposed on the right to information, including threats to journalists, a news blackout and media censorship, and urged the military junta to restore the media's right to report news freely. On the same day, the military junta authorized the reopening of the borders, including the airport and ports. While Bissau and the rest of the country appear to be calm, the environment remains tense and volatile, and a significant number of people have left Bissau for the interior of the country.

C. Update on the socio-economic situation

16. While most petrol stations and shops have remained open, some have opened only intermittently since the coup, for fear of looting. The country's banks were closed from 13 to 23 April. On 24 April, the military junta announced that civil servant salaries for April would not be paid as scheduled, owing to the absence of a Government. The cashew trading season, which is crucial to the economy and livelihood of the population, is expected to be negatively affected.

17. The political crisis has also affected health services, prisons and detention centres, which are not fully operational because of staff absences. The World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme are providing humanitarian assistance, including fuel, food, potable water, surgical supplies and other essential goods to the main hospital, prisons and detention centres.

III. Reactions to the coup

18. The Guinea-Bissau populace quickly reacted to the coup and the subsequent actions of the military junta. On 14 April, PAIGC issued a statement in which it condemned the coup d'état and called for the unconditional release and reinstatement of its leaders. On 15 April, the two trade union confederations in the country, the National Union of Guinean Workers and the General Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, condemned the coup and called on all workers to stay away from work until constitutional order is restored. On 16 April, the five presidential candidates opposing the outcome of the first round of the elections issued a statement condemning the coup, and on 17 April, the Catholic Bishops of Bissau and Bafatá issued a statement rejecting military action and the use of violence to resolve problems, and appealing for respect for the rule of law and democratically elected institutions. On 20 April, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League also condemned the coup and the political agreement signed by the military junta and its political allies, and demanded the release of all detainees and the restoration of constitutional order.

19. The international community, including the African Union, CPLP, ECOWAS, the European Union, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council and bilateral partners, has been unanimous in its condemnation of the coup d'état of 12 April and in its call for the immediate restoration of constitutional order and release of detained officials. I have also called on the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau to immediately and unconditionally release all detainees and to ensure the safety and security of the general population, as well as of members of the international community in Guinea-Bissau. The African Union, CPLP, ECOWAS and the European Union have also rejected the Agreement signed by the military junta and 21 political parties. In addition, the African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie have suspended Guinea-Bissau from their activities, while the African Development Bank and the World Bank have suspended development operations in the country until the full restoration of constitutional order. The European Union, which had previously suspended most of its aid to Guinea-Bissau following the military breach of constitutional order on 1 April 2010, announced the further review of its remaining

aid. In addition, the Peacebuilding Fund has temporarily ceased its disbursements in direct support to the Government.

20. On 22 April, an ECOWAS military technical mission arrived in Bissau to work with the military junta on modalities for the replacement of the departing Angolan technical mission (MISSANG) with an ECOWAS guard force. This followed an agreement between the Government of Angola and ECOWAS on 20 April for ECOWAS to observe and ensure the safe and peaceful withdrawal of MISSANG. The 200-strong MISSANG team, which was in Guinea-Bissau to support national efforts to reform the defence and security sectors under a technical support agreement, is withdrawing from the country following a decision by the Government of Angola to terminate the agreement because of continued criticism by the military leadership of Guinea-Bissau of the mission's objectives. At a meeting with UNIOGBIS on 24 April, the military junta however made it known that it has rejected the proposed ECOWAS guard force, which was also expected to act as a stabilization force as envisaged in the ECOWAS/CPLP road map for security sector reform, on the grounds that only the political leadership of Guinea-Bissau, when in place, could decide on the arrival of such a stabilization force.

IV. Steps being taken to resolve the crisis

21. In efforts to assist in resolving the political crisis emanating from the coup d'état, my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau embarked on an intensive round of consultations with national stakeholders, including parliamentarians, Cabinet Ministers, the "Military Command", political parties and civil society organizations. All national stakeholders expressed their support for a negotiated settlement under the auspices of ECOWAS.

22. My Special Representative has also continued to convene regular consultative meetings of international partners in Bissau to exchange information and ensure a more effective coordination of international efforts towards a return to constitutional order in the country.

23. On 24 April, he attended the African Union Peace and Security Council ministerial-level meeting in Addis Ababa to take part in discussions on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. Participants at the meeting emphasized the critical need to ensure coordination of international efforts aimed at returning the country to constitutional order. In the communiqué issued after the meeting, the Peace and Security Council requested the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to urgently convene, in the context of a multilateral consultation and coordination framework on the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau, a meeting that would bring together stakeholders, in particular ECOWAS, CPLP, the United Nations and the European Union, to develop a comprehensive strategy with a view to facilitating a speedy and lasting solution. It also requested the Commission, in view of the refusal of the coup leaders to respond positively to requests from the international community for the restoration of constitutional order, to compile and disseminate to all Member States, after appropriate consultations, the list of all members of the military junta and their military and civilian supporters, for application of individual measures. While in Addis Ababa, my Special Representative also held separate consultations with members of the African Union Peace and Security Council, as well as with the

President of the African Union Commission, on how the international community could best support ECOWAS efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

24. On 26 April, my Special Representative also attended an ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government convened by the ECOWAS Chairperson in Abidjan to consider the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and the possible deployment of ECOWAS troops to the country. Following the meeting, the ECOWAS leaders issued a communiqué in which they urged all stakeholders to submit to ECOWAS mediation efforts with a view to agreeing on the modalities for a consensual transition through the holding of elections within 12 months. The ECOWAS leaders instructed the Commission to deploy a contingent of the ECOWAS Standby Force to Guinea-Bissau, with immediate effect, to facilitate the withdrawal of MISSANG, assist in securing the transitional process, and undertake preparatory work for the immediate implementation of the security sector reform road map. It also put the military junta on notice that, if it failed to meet all the demands put forward by ECOWAS within 72 hours, the organization would impose, with immediate effect, targeted sanctions on members of the military junta and their associates, as well as diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions on Guinea-Bissau, with the possibility of prosecution by the International Criminal Court. The ECOWAS leaders also decided to put in place a regional contact and follow-up group on Guinea-Bissau to be chaired by Nigeria and also comprising representatives of Benin, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Senegal and Togo, to coordinate the implementation of the Summit's decision on Guinea-Bissau. Finally, the ECOWAS leaders urged the Commission to expedite the implementation of the ECOWAS operational plan on drug trafficking, particularly in Guinea-Bissau, through the mobilization of financial resources within and outside ECOWAS. On 27 April, a delegation of ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff was dispatched to Bissau to discuss the implementation of the ECOWAS Summit's decisions with the military junta. Following those discussions, the members of the military junta, at a press conference, announced that they had agreed to the deployment of an ECOWAS force to Guinea-Bissau. Later in the day, the military junta released Interim President Raimundo Pereira and Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior, who then travelled with the ECOWAS delegation to Abidjan.

25. In order to support the internal coordination of ongoing initiatives, UNIOGBIS is considering the establishment of a crisis contact group on Guinea-Bissau, comprising representatives of the African Union, CPLP, ECOWAS and the United Nations, which would help to improve information-sharing, ensure the coordination of decisions and actions by its members, and foster unity of purpose and reinforce mutual support among Guinea-Bissau's international partners. Meanwhile, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team continue to assist relevant national stakeholders in their efforts to meet peacebuilding and socio-economic development goals, although such assistance remains limited because of the absence of an active legitimate civilian authority.

V. Staff safety and security

26. The United Nations designated official instructed United Nations staff members to remain at home on 13 and 14 April. All staff have since returned to work. No security incidents involving staff members have been reported. A military

curfew which was imposed by the "Military Command" on 13 April remains in effect from 2130 to 0700 hours.

VI. Way forward

27. In order to achieve the priority objectives of restoring constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and implementing critical reforms in the defence, security and justice sectors, Guinea-Bissau's international partners have considered a number of options.

28. The first option involves mediation among national stakeholders aimed at facilitating a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the crisis. As mentioned earlier, ECOWAS has already taken several important steps to commence this mediation process, including the appointment of the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé as Mediator for Guinea-Bissau. In addition, as mentioned in paragraph 24 above, at their Summit on 26 April, ECOWAS Heads of State and Government also called on all stakeholders to submit to ECOWAS mediation efforts with a view to agreeing on the modalities for a consensual transition through the holding of elections within 12 months.

29. The second option being considered is the imposition of targeted sanctions on the perpetrators and supporters of the military coup. ECOWAS, the African Union and CPLP have already announced their intention to impose targeted sanctions on the coup leaders and their political and military supporters, including travel bans, the freezing of assets and other measures, while the European Union is considering similar actions. The Security Council may also wish to consider this option.

30. A third option is the possible deployment of training and protection units, as envisaged under the ECOWAS/CPLP road map, to assist with the implementation of the security sector reform programme and contribute towards the protection of State institutions. In this regard, I have taken note of the decision taken by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, at their extraordinary summit on Guinea-Bissau on 26 April, to deploy a standby force to Guinea-Bissau to, inter alia, facilitate the withdrawal of MISSANG, assist in securing the transitional process, and undertake preparatory work for the immediate implementation of the security sector reform road map. I have also noted the agreement of the military junta to the deployment of such a force.

31. A final option that has been requested by the Prime Minister, Carlos Gomes Júnior, in his letter to me of 9 April and, reiterated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau, Mamadú Saliu Djaló Pires, in his statement to the Security Council on 19 April, is the deployment of a peacekeeping or stabilization force. This option was also considered by the CPLP Council of Ministers at its extraordinary meeting on 14 April on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. Such a force could (a) maintain peace and security; (b) ensure constitutional order; (c) protect national institutions, legitimate authorities and the population; (d) ensure the completion of the electoral process; and (e) assist in implementing security sector reform. This option would need to be thoroughly assessed and carefully considered in the event that all previously considered options do not succeed in achieving the objective of returning the country to constitutional rule.

VII. Observations

32. I remain deeply concerned that, despite the international community's condemnation of the coup and its calls for the immediate return to civilian rule, the military junta remains intransigent. In the meantime, the political, security, human rights and socio-economic situation in the country is worsening.

33. I am pleased that the African Union, CPLP and ECOWAS have remained fully engaged in addressing the crisis in the country. The collective hope of the international community is to see the country's swift return to constitutional normalcy and the continuation of critical reform programmes. The steps taken by ECOWAS in finding a solution to this crisis must be fully supported. In this regard, I call on all national stakeholders, including the "Military Command", PAIGC, and other parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties, to commit themselves to the ECOWAS-led mediation process aimed at finding a sustainable solution to the political crisis in the country. My Special Representative will continue to work closely with ECOWAS in this regard.

34. The approach to addressing the crisis in the country must be a phased and measured one, commencing with inclusive dialogue and mediation, accompanied by targeted sanctions as needed, to ensure the swift and peaceful return to civilian rule.

35. I fully support the call by the Security Council for the international community to synchronize its efforts and to speak with one voice in finding a solution to the situation in Guinea-Bissau. In this regard, I encourage all international partners to strengthen their cooperation with my Special Representative and UNIOGBIS on the ground and to work closely together to ensure that all efforts towards political stability and peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau are harmonized.

36. I encourage Guinea-Bissau's international partners to remain committed to a long-term engagement in the country to support the people of Guinea-Bissau in addressing the medium- to long-term goal of resolving the underlying causes of the current crisis. I also urge the immediate implementation of security sector reform.

37. The problem of drug-trafficking in Guinea-Bissau needs to be urgently addressed. The political and military leadership have accused each other of being involved in the illegal narcotics trade. Concerted efforts to combat this problem could go a long way in addressing impunity in Guinea-Bissau. I call on Member States to reinforce their commitment and efforts in fighting this scourge at the points of production, transit and consumption and on the basis of shared responsibility for effective results. Regional support, through ECOWAS, to complement national efforts will be crucial as the scourge is transnational and goes beyond boundaries. I therefore welcome the decision of ECOWAS Heads of State to urge the ECOWAS Commission to expedite action on the implementation of its operational plan on drug-trafficking.

38. Any lasting solution to instability in Guinea-Bissau should include concrete actions to fight impunity and ensure that those responsible for political assassinations, including those committed in 2009, and other serious crimes such as drug-trafficking-related activities and breaches of constitutional order are brought to justice. It is time to put an end to the cycle of impunity in Guinea-Bissau and to establish a stable political environment conducive to socio-economic development and the realization of human rights in the country.

39. I would like to conclude by commending the staff of UNIOGBIS, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Joseph Mutaboba, and the United Nations country team led by my Deputy Special Representative, Gana Fofang, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations and other partners, for their continuing contribution, in difficult circumstances, to peacebuilding efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

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Letter dated 1 May 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit the concept paper for the Security Council briefing on the theme "Strengthening international cooperation in the implementation of counter-terrorism obligations", which is to be held on 4 May 2012 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Agshin **Mehdiyev**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper on "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts: strengthening international cooperation in the implementation of counter-terrorism obligations"

Introduction

Widespread and indiscriminate by nature, terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, the enjoyment of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, territorial integrity and security and the social and economic development of all Member States. Azerbaijan strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and considers that all terrorist acts are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation.

As an active contributor to international counter-terrorism efforts, Azerbaijan gives utmost importance to the implementation of its counter-terrorism obligations at both the global and regional levels. The scourge of terrorism and its increasing connection with other threats to international peace and security require more comprehensive and coordinated actions at the national, regional and international levels. The success of international cooperation depends to a significant extent on the ability of all Member States to fully implement their respective counter-terrorism obligations.

In its capacity as the President of the Security Council in May 2012, Azerbaijan will hold a high-level thematic meeting of the Security Council on counter-terrorism, with a particular focus on strengthening international cooperation in the implementation of counter-terrorism obligations. The meeting is scheduled to be held on 4 May 2012, in a "briefing" format.

Background

The need to combat terrorism by all means has been recognized through the adoption of relevant resolutions by the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies and through the elaboration of universal legal instruments that seek to prevent terrorist acts. Those documents emphasize the need for enhanced cooperation among States at all levels to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They also highlight the fact that there is recourse to legal frameworks by Member States in their efforts to counter terrorism. However, it is not enough to stress the full implementation of legal obligations and to call on Member States to become parties to all relevant international instruments. The requirements are, on the one hand, for Member States to incorporate these instruments into their domestic legislation and to implement them effectively and, on the other hand, for the United Nations and the broader international community to render necessary assistance and support in this regard.

The very fact that the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted by universal consensus in 2006 shows that its implementation should be universal in nature. Although the United Nations system continues to play an important role in providing capacity-building and technical assistance to Member

States, the timely and decisive response of Member States in the implementation of the Global Strategy remains disparate.

As in previous years, the Secretary-General's third report on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, due in April 2012, will affirm the central role of the Strategy in providing strategic direction, guidance and standards for efforts through the United Nations system, primarily by Member States, to counter terrorism. It is expected that the report will also contain suggestions for the effective implementation of the Strategy across its four pillars to be subsequently considered within the context of the forthcoming third review report on the Global Strategy.

Objectives

As the nature and character of terrorism changes, ranging from actions by single individuals to actions associated with well-known groups, including those sponsored by States in contravention of their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as the involvement of such groups in other illegal activities, the need to strengthen international cooperation remains strong. It is hoped that the high-level meeting will discuss further steps to strengthen international cooperation with a view to implementing the existing counter-terrorism obligations in a timely and united manner, in particular through increasing capacity-building and technical assistance to States, as well as through enhancing coordination and coherence within the United Nations.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy calls for enhanced international cooperation, mainly through the normative framework established by the General Assembly and the actions of the Security Council to maintain international peace and security. These actions have framed a coordinated international response to terrorism. The creation of mechanisms and subsidiary bodies, such as the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the 1373 (2001) Committee and its executive directorate, the 1267 (1999) and the 1540 (2004) Committees and their expert groups, has helped States in undertaking measures to counter terrorism and has promoted international cooperation in the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

It remains important that States continue to coordinate and cooperate in this regard, and to strengthen interaction both among themselves and between the United Nations and other organizations. Further attention could be given to the need to focus on the development of national and regional strategies and implementation plans, highlighting, in particular, the role of regional organizations in counter-terrorism cooperation activities. The establishment and implementation of regional strategies, with the support of regional organizations, would advance the strengthening of a coherent and consolidated international response to countering terrorism.

The ability to listen to lessons learned from the experiences of Member States would further strengthen this coordinated and holistic approach and would underscore the importance of establishing a culture of dialogue and understanding among all parties in order to prevent terrorism. The establishment of various mechanisms for assessing, compiling and disseminating best practices in areas where the necessary conventions, standards and norms and resource materials exist

would also further the building of a more coherent and universal approach suited to the needs of Member States.

Such cooperation is also essential from the viewpoint of enhancing the individual capabilities of Member States to implement their counter-terrorism obligations. Increasing capacities and providing assistance to efforts to prevent and combat terrorism, with a view to developing and maintaining effective rule-of-law-based national criminal systems, with provisions for judicial criminal cooperation and mutual legal assistance, is a core element of global counter-terrorism efforts. Such measures are instrumental in terms of enhancing the ability of Member States to work on counter-terrorism measures at the national, regional and international levels and ensuring that those active in the field of counter-terrorism receive adequate training and technical assistance to further their work.

In the absence of a systematic and coordinated approach, efforts to eradicate terrorism will continue to be fragmented and disparate. Entities and organizations working on counter-terrorism will continue to do so at their own pace, implementing their own mandates, and often duplicating efforts. Further consolidation of the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts is another important aspect of promoting international cooperation to enhance collective and individual capabilities to prevent and combat terrorism. The need for one body to manage all these efforts was made clear by the Secretary-General when he established the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in 2005, and it was further reinforced through the Symposium on International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, held at the United Nations in September 2011, which called for the full and timely integration of the Strategy.

The recent establishment within the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre is important in terms of further strengthening the ability of the United Nations to enhance its assistance to Member States. At the same time, the appointment of a United Nations counter-terrorism coordinator will bring further coherence and focused effort to the implementation of the United Nations Strategy.

Outcome

It is the intention of Azerbaijan to have a presidential statement approved by the Security Council at the end of the high-level meeting which will recognize the efforts of Member States, as well as the activities of the United Nations system, in the implementation of counter-terrorism obligations and which will stress the importance of further strengthening international cooperation, including through the establishment of a more coordinated, coherent and systematic United Nations approach.